

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 00686 250806 Z

47

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 IO-12

OMB-01 RSR-01 /104 W

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R 241642 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4695

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINT, EI

SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: ACTIVE CAMPAIGN ON BOTH SIDES

SUMMARY : O' HIGGINS STILL BELIEVED TO HOLD LEAD OVER CHILDERS IN PRESIDENTIAL RACE, BUT NEITHER SIDE IS CONFIDENT YET. MOST IMPORTANT ELECTION ISSUE IS PERFORMANCE OF NEW GOVT, WHICH WIDELY ADMITTED TO BE GOOD. MORE IMPORTANT THAN ISSUES, HOWEVER, MAY BE DISCIPLINE OF LABOR VOTERS, WHO ARE BEING ASKED SUPPORT FINE GAEL CANDIDATE. END SUMMARY.

1. BOTH PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES HAVE CONDUCTED ACTIVE AND COMPETENT CAMPAIGN FOR MAY 30 ELECTIONS. THOUGH PUBLIC DOES NOT SEEM DEEPLY INTERESTED, PARTIES HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT THEY CONSIDER RACE A TEST OF PUBLIC SUPPORT, SO RESULTS WILL ASSUME NATURE OF OPINION POLL ON NEW GOVT. THIS IS PROBABLY MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF ELECTION, GIVEN PRESIDENCY'S LACK OF POWER.

2. BOTH SIDES ARE RUNNING SCARED, BUT OBJECTIVE OBSERVERS GENERALLY BELIEVE THAT O' HIGGINS HAS SO FAR RETAINED HIS EARLY LEAD. HIS SUPPORTERS SAY THAT HIS

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PAGE 02 DUBLIN 00686 250806 Z

CAMPAIGN HAS GONE EXTREMELY WELL IN COUNTRYSIDE, BUT THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT DUBLIN AREA. O' HIGGINS' SUPPORTERS HAVE COMMISSIONED A POLL WHICH THEY SAY SHOWS HIM AHEAD BY ABOUT 60 TO 40, BUT WE DO NOT KNOW DETAILS AND RELIABILITY.

3. IN NEWSPAPER LETTER COLUMNS, ONE OF CAMPAIGN'S MAIN ISSUES HAS BEEN CHILDERS' INABILITY TO SPEAK IRISH LANGUAGE. SOME FINE GAEL MEN HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS BY HINTING THAT CHILDERS IS NOT REALLY QUITE AS IRISH AS O' HIGGINS. THIS COULD ALSO REMIND VOTERS OF FACT THAT CHILDERS HAS ENGLISH- SOUNDING ACCENT AND IS PROTESTANT. FINE GAEL LEADERS SEEM TO BE DISCOURAGING USE OF THIS LINE, HOWEVER. THERE IS DANGER OF BACKFIRE, AS MANY IRISHMEN DO NOT SPEAK IRISH AND TAKE PRIDE IN SEEMING BROAD- MINDED ON MATTERS RELIGIOUS.

4. MORE VALID ISSUE IS PERFORMANCE OF NEW GOVT, WHICH NEUTRAL OBSERVERS CONSIDER REMARKABLY GOOD. SINCE TAKING OFFICE, COALITION HAS BEEN EXTREMELY ACTIVE, UNLIKE PREVIOUS GOVT, AND HAS ANNOUNCED VARIETY OF REFORMS WHICH HAVE CUMULATIVE IMPORTANCE IN LOCAL CONTEXT. MOST RECENTLY, FOR EXAMPLE, GOVT EXTENDED SOCIAL SECURITY TYPE INSURANCE TO ALL WORKERS. ( IT WAS PREVIOUSLY CONFINED TO LOWER- PAID). SEVERAL MINISTERS COMPARE VERY FAVORABLY TO FIANNA FAIL PREDECESSORS. NOTABLE HERE ARE FITZGERALD ( FOREIGN AFFAIRS) AND BURKE ( EDUCATION), BUT MOST OF CABINET HAS LOOKED COMPETENT, AND JOURNALISTS HAVE COMMENTED THAT IT IS NICE TO HAVE GOOD GOVT FOR A CHANGE. PM COSGRAVE, HOWEVER, HAS NOT BEEN GETTING PARTICULARLY HIGH MARKS, EXCEPT FOR HIS SKILL IN APPOINTING MINISTERS. HIS PERSONAL APPOINTMENTS TO SENATE WERE PEDESTRIAN AND HAVE DRAWN SOME CRITICISM. SITUATION IS THUS OPPOSITE OF PREVIOUS GOVT, WHERE PM LYNCH SEEMED TO BE ONLY BRIGHT SPOT.

5. AFTER EXPERIENCE IN RECENT GENERAL ELECTIONS, HOWEVER, WE ARE WARY OF ATTRIBUTING TOO MUCH IMPORTANCE TO THE ISSUES. IN GENERAL ELECTIONS, COALITION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 DUBLIN 00686 250806 Z

CERTAINLY RAN BEST CAMPAIGN BUT DECISIVE FACTOR WAS MECHANICAL ONE: EFFECTIVE TRANSFER OF VOTES BETWEEN FINE GAEL AND LABOR CANDIDATES. SIMILARLY, LEADING FACTOR IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION COULD WELL BE DISCIPLINE OF LABOR VOTERS, WHO ARE URGED BY LEADERS TO SUPPORT O' HIGGINS. MOORE

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